INDVLGENCE AND TOLERATION CONSIDERED: IN A LETTER UNTO A Perſon of Honour.

London, Printed in the year 1667.

SIR,

Have conſidered the *Diſcourſes* ſent me, publiſhed lately about *Indulgence* and *Toleration*. At their firſt view, I confeſs I was not a little ſurprized with their *Number*, as not underſtanding the reaſon of their *Multiplication* at this time, nor what it was that had made them *ſwarm* ſo unſeaſonably. Upon their peruſal, I quickly perceived a defect in them all, which could no other ways be ſupplied; whether it be ſo by this means or no, Impartial Men will judge. The Deſign ſeems to have been; That what is wanting in them ſingly in *Reaſon*, may joyntly be made up in *Noiſe*; and their reſpective defects in *Argument*, be ſupplied by their communion in *Suffrage*. It will doubtleſs be the wiſdom of thoſe who are concerned in what they oppoſe, to ſtand out of their way, at leaſt until the ſtorm is over.

——Omnis campis diffugit arator
Omni & Agricola,——
Dum pluit in terris, ut poſſint ſole reducto
Excercere diem.——

Their Reaſon will be better attended to, when this earneſtneſs hath a little ſpent it ſelf. For Men who have attained more than perhaps they ever aimed at, at leaſt than they had juſt reaſon to

expect, have commonly for a while strong desires to secure their possessions, which Time and a due consideration of their Title and Interest, may somewhat calm and allay. In the mean time, because *You expect it*, I shall give you a brief account of my thoughts concerning the Matter treated of by them; and if that do not too long detain me, of the reasonings also which they make use of. Some things I do much commend their *Ingenuity* in; For whereas two things were proposed to them, A Compliance with some by way of *Condescention*, and a Forbearance of others by way of *Moderation*, they equally declare against them both. They will neither *admit* others to them, but upon their own terms to the utmost *Punctilio*; nor bear with any in their *dissent* from them in the least different Observances; but all must be alike pursued by *Law* and *Force*, to their Ruine. Whether this seem not to be the frame of mens spirits, whose *Fortune and Power* (as one of them speaks) *tempts them to an insolency*, sober and dis-interested persons will judge. The minds I confess of *fortunate Men* are for the most part equal unto their Successes; and what *befalls* them, they count their *due*. Nothing else could perswade these men that they alone were to be esteemed **English-Men**, and that not onely as unto all Priviledges and Advantages attending that Title; but so far also, as to desire that all who differ from them, should be *exterminated* from their Native Soyl. It were well if we could see more of their endeavours to *merit* so high a favour, more of that usefulness, and advantage which they bring to the Kingdom, that might countenance them in pleading that they *alone ought to be in it*. For my part, I can see little consistency with Christianity, Humanity, or Prudence, in these Resolutions. For certainly if that be *Christian Religion* which we are taught in the Gospel, it inclines men, especially those who are *Teachers of it*, (such as the Authors of these Discourses, at least most of them, seem to be) unto a greater *Condescention* than that expressed, upon the Causes, and for the Ends of its being desired. The request of some for a *Condescention*, seems to be no more, but that the Rulers of the Church would forbear the prescription and imposition of such things on the *Consciences* and *Practise* of men, (for it is vain to pretend that Conscience is not concerned in practise in the worship of God) as there is not one word about, nor any thing inclining, leading, or directing *to-*

wards,

wards, in the *whole Bible*, that were never thought of, mentioned or commanded by Jesus Christ, or his Apostles, or any *Apostolical* Men; that if they had not unhappily fallen upon the minds of some Men to invent, none knows *who*, nor *where*, nor *when*, would have had no concernment in Christian Religion.

They indeed who impose them, say they are *things indifferent*. But the *differences* that have been almost this hundred years about these *things indifferent*, is enough to frighten and discourage unbiass'd men from having any thing to do with them. And what wise man, methinks would not at length be contented, that these *differences* and *indifferent things* may be parted withal together? Besides, they on whom they are imposed, account them not so: They look upon them as *unlawful for them to use* and practise (all circumstances considered) at least most of them do so. And they plead by the important Argument of their Sufferings, that it is meerly on the *account of Conscience* that they do not conform unto them. Others think that it is not so; but I am sure it is possible that it may be so; and if it be so, they cannot use them without endangering the Eternal Ruine of their own Souls; though others may speed otherwise in their observances, who have other thoughts and apprehensions of their Nature and Use. And yet on the other side, if those that *impose* these things, can make it appear with any probability, (I had almost said if they would but pretend) that they were *obliged in Conscience to impose them*, by my consent there should be an end of this strife. But whilst there is this Left-handed Contest, *Real Will* and *Pretended Prudence*, fighting against *Conscience* and *Duty*, it is like to be untoward and troublesome. And for what end is it that some desire that there might be at least some relaxation as to the present *severe Impositions* of some of the things which are thus contended about? They say it is meerly that they might serve God in the Gospel to the *good of others*, without sinning against him, to the ruine of themselves. They speak particularly unto Men who profess it to be their *Calling*, their Work, their Design to promote the blessed ends of the Gospel towards the Souls of Men: They desire of them that they may have leave to come and *help them* in reference unto this end. Nor can it be pretended, That they themselves are sufficient for the Work, and that they have no need of the *Assistance* of others: God and Man know that this cannot be reasonably pleaded.

And

And this is a buſineſs, which certainly by ſuch men as profeſs themſelves to be Guides and Rulers of the Church, can hardly be juſtified unto him who is the great Lord of it. When the Diſciples found ſome caſting out of *Devils in his name*, they rebuked them becauſe they *followed not with them*; a worſe and greater *non-conformity* than that which ſome are now charged withal; and yet the rebuke of others, procured only *one* to themſelves. He ſaid well of old, concerning thoſe who contended to promote common good; ἀγαθὴ δ' ἔρις ἥδε βροτοῖσι, *This is a good ſtrife for mortal men*: So is that which is for promoting of the good of the ſouls of men by the preaching of the Goſpel; and ſhall it be forbid for ſuch things,

——*Quæ dicere Nolo,*

of ſo little importance are they in this matter, which hath an influence into Eternity. What is anſwered unto this *requeſt?* Stories are told of things paſt and gone; *ſcattered* intereſts, *diſſolved* intrigues, buried miſcarriages, ſuch as never can have any *aſpect* on the preſent poſture of Affairs, and minds of men in this Nation, are gathered together, and *raked* out of their graves, to compoſe *Mormoes* for the affrightment of men from a regard to the ways of peace and *moderation*: This they enlarge upon with much *Rhetorick*, and ſome *little Sophiſtry*; Like him of old, of whom it was ſaid, that being charged with other things,

——*Crimina raſis*
Librat in antithetis; doctas poſuiſſe figuras
Laudatur.——

Many inconveniencies are pretended, as like to enſue upon ſuch a condeſcention: but in the mean time *men die*, and ſome it may be *periſh* for want of that help and inſtruction in the things of Eternity, which there are many ready to give them, whilſt it is altogether uncertain, whether any one of the pretended inconveniencies will enſue or no: I fear whilſt men are ſo engaged in their thoughts about what is good and convenient for them at the *preſent*, they do ſcarce ſufficiently ponder, what account of their actions they muſt make *hereafter*.

But neither is this all that theſe Authors contend for: Men are

are not only denied by them an *admiſſion into their Societies* to preach the Goſpel, unleſs it be on ſuch terms as they cannot in conſcience admit of, and which others are no way obliged in conſcience to impoſe upon them; but all *forbearance* of, or *indulgence* unto them who cannot *conform* unto the *preſent eſtabliſhment*, is decried, and pleaded againſt: What though men are *peaceable*, and *uſeful* in the Common-wealth? What though they are every way *ſound in the Faith*, and cordialy imbrace all the doctrine taught formerly in the *Church of England*? What though thoſe in this condition are *many*, and ſuch as in whoſe peace and induſtry, the welfare of the Nation is exceedingly concerned? What if they offer to be *inſtructed* by any who will take that work upon them, in the things about which their differences are? What if they plead *conſcience* towards God, and that alone, in their diſſent; it being evidently againſt their whole *temporal intereſt*? What if they have given evidence of their readineſs in the ways of Chriſt and the Goſpel, to oppoſe *every errour* that is either *pernicious* to the ſouls of men, or any way of an evil aſpect to *publique peace* and tranquility? All is one, they are neither ſeverally, nor joyntly, no one of them, nor all of them, in the judgment of theſe *Gentlemen*, to be forborn, or to have any Indulgence exerciſed toward them; but Laws are to be made and put in execution againſt them to their ruine, extirpation and deſtruction. It may be it will be ſaid, that theſe things are *unduly impoſed* on them, ſeeing they preſs for a proſecution of men by Laws and rigour, not for *diſſenting* from what is eſtabliſhed, or not practiſing what is preſcribed in the *publick Worſhip* of God, but for practiſing what is of their *own choice* therein, in Meetings and Aſſemblies of their own; otherwiſe they may *keep their conſciences unto themſelves* without moleſtation.

But it doth not appear, that this can be juſtly pleaded in their defence: For as the Prohibition of men under ſevere and diſtructive penalties, from that exercile of the worſhip of God, which is ſuitable to their light, and which they are convinced that he requires of them, ſo that in nothing it *interfere* with the *fundamentals* of Chriſtian Religion, or publick tranquility, is as deſtitute of all Foundation in Scripture and Reaſon at *all times*,

times, and as things may be circumſtantiated in Prudence or Policy; as the inforcing of them to a *practical* compliance with any *mode* or way of Worſhip againſt their Light and conſcience; ſo the practice in this *latter caſe* hath been more *ſevere* amongſt us, than in the *former*. For a Teſtimony hereof, we have thoſe great Multitudes which at this day are *Excommunicated* by the *Courts Eccleſiaſtical*, meerly for their not attending the publique Aſſemblies of the Nation in their Adminiſtrations: And as they are by this means, as things now ſtand, caſt, as they ſay, into the condition of men *out-Lawed* and deprived of all priviledges of their birth-right as *Engliſh-men* (of which ſort there are forty times more, than have been proceeded againſt unto the ſame iſſue in all his Majeſties Courts of Juſtice in *England* for many years) ſo in the purſuite of that ſentence, many are *caſt into priſons*, where they lye periſhing (ſundry being dead in that ſtate already) whilſt their *families* are ſtarved or reduced to the utmoſt extremity of poverty, for want of thoſe ſupplies which their induſtry formerly furniſhed them with all: And what influence this will have into the ſtate of this Nation, time will manifeſt, if men are not as yet at leaſure to conſider. The *hands* that by this means are taken off from labour, the *ſtocks* from imployment, the *minds* from contrivances of induſtry in their own concerns, the poverty that is brought on Families, in all which the common good hath no ſmall Intereſt, are not I fear ſufficiently conſidered by perſons whoſe fullneſs and plenty either diverts their thoughts from taking notice of them, or keeps off any impreſſions on their minds and judgments from what is repreſented concerning them. Others begin to feel the evil, whoſe *morning* they ſaw not, gathering up towards them, in the *decay* of their Revenues, and intanglements of their Eſtates, which without timely remedy, will increaſe upon them, untill the *breach* grow too great for an ordinary healing.

And I am perſwaded that none who have been active in theſe proceedings, will take upon themſelves the trouble of confirming this kind of *Church Diſcipline* out of the Scriptures, or Examples of the Primitive Churches, for ſome hundreds of years.

This therefore, is that which by theſe men is pleaded for; namely that all the *Proteſtants in England* who *ſo* diſſent from the eſtabliſhed Forms and Modes of Worſhip, as either to *ab-*

ſent

ſent themſelves from their Obſervances, or to attend unto any other way of Worſhip, which being ſuitable to the Principles of that Religion which they profeſs, (namely *Proteſtantiſm*) they are perſwaded is according to the Mind of God, and which He requires of Them, be proceeded againſt, not onely with *Eccleſiaſtical Cenſures*, but alſo with *Outward*, *Pecuniary*, and *Corporal Puniſhments*, to the depriving of Them in the progreſs, of Their whole Liberty, Freedom, and Benefit of the Laws of the Land, and in ſome Caſes unto Death it ſelf; and that no *Diſpenſation* or *Relaxation* of this ſeverity, be countenanced or granted. And herein I confeſs, whatever Pretences be uſed, whatever Fears and Jealouſies of Events upon a contrary Courſe, or the granting of an *Indulgence* be pleaded, I am not of their Minds; nor do I think that any countenance can be given to this *ſevere Principle* and Opinion, either from the Scriptures of the Old or New Teſtament, or from the Example of any who ever endeavoured a Conformity unto the Rules of them. This is the ſtate of the Controverſie, as by theſe Authors formed and handled; nor may any thing elſe be pretended, when ſuch Multitudes are ready to give Evidence unto it, by what they have ſuffered and undergone. Do but open the Priſons for the relief of thoſe Peaceable, Honeſt, Induſtrious, Diligent Men, who ſome of them have lain *ſeveral* Years in *Durance*, meerly in the purſuit of *Excommunication*, and there will be Teſtimony enough given to this ſtate of the Controverſie.

This being ſo, pray give me leave to preſent you with my *haſty Thoughts*, both as to the Reaſonableneſs, Conſcience, and Principles of purſuing that Courſe of Severity towards Diſſenters, which I find ſo many *Concerned Perſons* to plead for: And alſo of the *way* of their Arguings and Pleas.

And firſt as unto *Reaſon* and *Conſcience*, I think Men had need look well unto the Grounds of their Actings, in things wherein they proceed againſt the *Common Conſent* of Mankind, expreſſed in all inſtances of the like occaſion, that have occurred in the World; which is as great an Evidence of the Light and Law of Nature, as any can be obtained. For what all Men generally conſent in, is from the common Nature of all. We are not indeed much concerned to inquire after the *practiſe of the Heathen* in this matter, becauſe as the Apoſtle teſtifies, their Idolatrous

Confuſion in Religion was directly and manifeſtly againſt the Light of Nature; and where the foundation was laid in a tranſgreſſion of that Law, it is no wonder if the proceeding upon it be ſo alſo. There was a Law amongſt the *Romans*, reported by the Orator to be one of thoſe of the *Twelve Tables*, forbidding any to have *private Gods* of their own: But this regarded the *Gods themſelves*, the Object of their Worſhip, and not *the Way of Worſhipping them*, which was peculiar and ſeparate to many Families and Tribes amongſt them, and ſo obſerved. Scarce any Family or Tribe of note, that had not its ſpecial and ſeparate *Sacra*. Beſides, they ſeemed to have little need of any *new Authorized Gods*, ſeeing as *Varro* obſerved, they had of them they owned, no leſs than thirty thouſand. And I have often thought that Law was impoſed on them by the craft and projection of *Satan*, to keep them off from the knowledge of the true God: For notwithſtanding this Law, they admitted into their *Superſtition* all ſorts of Idols, even the folly of *Egyptians* themſelves, as having Temples in *Rome* unto *Iſis* and *Serapis*. Onely this Law was pleaded to keep off the knowledge of the true God, *Act.* 18. 13. And of him they had the higheſt contempt, calling the place of his Worſhip, the Land

——— *Dei incerti.* ———

And the Cuſtome among the *Athenians* not to admit any ſtrange *Objects of Worſhip*, any Unwarranted Devotion, was never made uſe of, but to oppoſe the *Goſpel*, unleſs it were when they deſtroyed the *Wiſeſt and Beſt Man that ever the City bred*, for giving ſome intimation of the true God, and not conſenting with the *City* in Opinion about their *Eſtabliſhed Devotions:* Other *uſe* of theſe Laws there was none. It is true, when any *Sacra* or *Superſtitious Obſervances* were actually uſed to induce Men and Women to Sin and Wickedneſs, contrary to the Light of Nature, the very Being of Civil Societies, the *Romans* ſeverely animadverted upon them: Otherwiſe this Law was not made uſe of, but onely againſt the *Jews* firſt, and the *Chriſtians* afterwards; whereby it was conſecrated to the uſe of Idolatry, and rendred unmeet for the Churches Service or Reception.

The *Jews* were thoſe who were firſt intruſted with the Truth of

of Religion and the Worſhip of God. And it is known what was their *Law*, their *Cuſtom*, their *Practice* in this *Matter*. Whoever would dwell amongſt them, if they owned their *Fundamentals*, they afforded them the Bleſſing and Peace of the Land. All that they required of ſuch Perſons, was but the Obſervation of the *Seven Noachical Precepts*, containing the Principles of the Light of Nature, as to the *Worſhip of one God*, and Moral Honeſty amongſt Men; whoever would live amongſt them of the *Gentiles*, and took upon themſelves the obſervation of theſe *Fundamentals*, although they ſubjected themſelves to no *inſtituted Ordinances*, they called *Proſelytes of the Gate*, and gave them all Liberty and Peace. And in thoſe who ſubmitted unto the Law of *Moſes*, who knows not what different Sects and Opinions, and *Modes of Worſhip* there were amongſt them, which they never once ſuppoſed that they had any Rule to proceed againſt by external Force and Coercion.

The Caſe is yet more evidently expreſſed in the Judgement and Actings of the firſt Chriſtians. It will be utterly ſuperfluous to ſhew how that for three hundred years, there was not any amongſt them who entertained thoughts of *Outward Force* againſt thoſe who differed from the *Moſt*, in the things of Chriſtian Religion. It hath been done I perceive of late by others. And yet in that ſpace of time, with that Principle, the Power of Religion ſubdued the World, and brake the force of that *Law* whereby the *Romans* through the Inſtigation of Satan, endeavoured with Force and Cruelty to ſuppreſs it. When the *Empire* became *Chriſtian*, the ſame Principle bare ſway. For though there were mutual Violences offered by thoſe who differed in great and weighty Fundamental Truths, as the *Homouſians* and *Arians*; As to thoſe who agreeing in the important Doctrines of *the Goſpel*, took upon *themſelves* a peculiar and ſeparate way of *Worſhip and Diſcipline* of their own, whereby they were *exempt* from the common Courſe and Diſcipline of the *Church*, *then in uſe*, never any *thoughts* entered into men, to give unto *them* the leaſt diſturbance. The Kingdom of *Ægypt* alone had *at the ſame time* above *forty thouſand Perſons*, Men and Women, living in *their private and ſeparate Way of Worſhip*, without the leaſt controul from the Governours of Church or State; yea, with their Approbation and Incouragement.

So was it all the World over, not to mention the many different Observances that were in and amongst *the Churches themselves*, which occasioned not *Division*, much less *Persecution* of one another. And so prevalent is this Principle, that notwithstanding all their Design for a forcing unto an *Uniformity*, as their peculiar Interest, yet it hath taken place in the Church of *Rome* it self, and doth so to this day. It is known to all, that there is no Nation wherein that Religion is inthroned, but that there are thousands in it that are allowed their particular ways of Worship, and are exempt from the common ordinary Jurisdiction of the Church.

It seems therefore, that we are some of the first who ever any where in the World, from the Foundation of it, thought of ruining and destroying Persons of the *SAME RELIGION* with our selves, meerly upon the choice of some *Peculiar Ways of Worship* in that Religion. And it's but reasonable, as was observed, for men to look well to the grounds of what they do, when they act contrary to the Principles of the Law of Nature, expresst in so many Instances by the consent of Mankind. And I fear all men do not aright consider, what a secret Influence into the Enervating of *Political Societies* such Intrenchments on the Principles of Natural Light, will assuredly have. For those things which spring up in the Minds of Men without Arguing or Consideration from without, will insensibly prevail in them against all Law and Constitution to the Contrary. It is in vain to turn Nature out of doors, it will return. And whence shall we learn what Nature inclines unto, unless from the common practise of Mankind in all Instances, where an evident demonstration may not be given, of the prevalent influence of the interest of some Men unto the contrary? Which is,

——Pessimus Diuturnitatis custos.

It will not always prevail, nor ever at any time without great regreet and commotion in the minds of Men, who have no concern in that Interest.

Consider also the thing it self, of **Forcing the Consciences of Men**, in manner before expressed; and you will find it so *uncouth*, as I am perswaded you will not know well what to make of

of it. *Learned Divines* tell us, **That Conſcience is the Judgement that a man maketh of Himſelf and his Actions, with reference to the future Judgement of God**; or to that purpoſe. Now let others do what they will, Conſcience will ſtill make this Judgment, nor can it do otherwiſe. Whatever Men can alter in the Outward Actings of Mens Lives, they can alter Nothing in the Inward Conſtitution of the Nature given it by God in its Creation, which refers to its Future End. How can this be forced?

It is ſaid therefore, *Let Men take this liberty unto themſelves: Who forbids them to judge of Themſelves and of their Actions, what they pleaſe? None goes about to take this Liberty from them.*

But is this all? *Conſcience* doth not judge of Men and their Actions, but with reſpect unto what in the Name of God it requires them to *be*, and to *do*. It firſt requires ſeveral things of them in the Name of God, and then *judges* upon their performance, with reference unto the Judgement of God: And this is the ſoveraign Dictate of it, **Worſhip God according to that Light and Underſtanding which you have, of what is that Worſhip which is acceptable with Him, in matter and manner, and no otherwiſe.** If this Command be not obeyed, *Conſcience* will *judge* with reference unto the Judgement to come. Let *Conſcience* then have its Liberty for this Work, and this Difference is at an end.

But it will be ſaid, If Conſcience muſt be free as to it *firſt Act* of Directing and Commanding, as well as unto its Self-Judging, it may lead men to all Abominations, Wickedneſs, Murthers, Sedition and Filthineſs; and ſo a Liberty unto them alſo muſt be granted. So I have heard men ſpeak, but I have wondered alſo that any man that hath a *Conſcience of his own*, or knows what Conſcience is, ſhould give entertainment to ſo fond an Imagination: I would ask any man whether ever he found any ſuch direction in his own Conſcience, or any Inclination that way? Nay, if he have not conſtantly found a ſevere Interdiction given in by his Conſcience againſt all ſuch things? And how can he then conceive it poſſible that the Conſcience of any man ſhould be of ſuch a Make, and Conſtitution; ſeeing naturally it is abſolutely the ſame in all. Beſides, as was ſaid, It is a mans judgment of himſelf in reference to the future Judgment of God. And this

this Intimation ſuppoſeth, that a man may judge that God at the Laſt day will approve of *Adultery*, Murders, Seditions and the like Evils! Which is to ſuppoſe all common inbred Notions of God to be blotted out of the mind: Nay it is utterly impoſſible, as implying a *contradiction*, that any man ſhould conſider *God as a Judge*, as Conſcience doth always, and ſuppoſe his Approbation of the Evils ſpecified, or of any of the like nature and importance: But men will yet ſay that Conſcience hath been pretended for theſe things. I anſwer, *never* by any in their wits. And what any brain-ſick, or *Enthuſiaſtick* Perſon may ſay or doe in his *Paroxiſms*, is not to have any place in conſiderations of what becomes a guidance of the Actions of Man-kind one towards another. It is true; that ſome things as they have been Circumſtantiated, have been debated, even in Conſcience, whether they have been Lawful or no; that is whether God would approve of them, or condemn them at the laſt day. But what is evil in its ſelf, and againſt the light of Nature, there is no direction unto it, no approbation of it from Conſcience in the leaſt. To take away this *Liberty of Conſcience* in things of its proper Cognizance and Duty, ſeems to me, to be as much as to ſay, men ſhall not judge themſelves with reference to the Judgment of God to come; which is to put Gods great Vicegerent out of his place and Throne.

Let us now apply this notion of Conſcience unto the preſent occaſion. There is preſcribed a way of Divine Worſhip, with Ceremonies, Forms of Prayer, and Orders for the Adminiſtration of Sacraments, all things that concern the Joynt and Publique Worſhip of God. What is the Work or Duty of Conſcience in reference hereunto? Is it not, in the firſt place, to apply the Mind and Underſtanding to conſider of what ſort it is, in referrence unto the future Judgment of God? This cannot be denied; the firſt Actings of a man who makes any Conſcience of what he does, muſt be of this ſort. If then it apprehend it to be ſuch as God will approve of the Practice, and Obſervation of it at the laſt Day, Conſcience is ſatisfied, and reflects no *ſelf-Condemning* thoughts upon its Obſervance. But ſuppoſe a man doth not underſtand it ſo to be; he cannot conceive it to be appointed ſo by Chriſt, nor that any men have Warrant, Authority, or Commiſſion to impoſe on the practice of others what is not ſo

appointed

appointed by him. How ſhall he do to be otherwiſe minded? Can he *force* himſelf to *aſſent* unto that, whereunto in truth he doth not aſſent? Is it in his power ſo to do: Ask any man who hath an *Underſtanding*, whether he can apply it to what he will; that is to *aſſent*, or not *aſſent* unto what is propoſed unto him: All men will aſſuredly ſay, that their *aſſent* neceſſarily followeth the *evidence* that they have of the truth of any thing, and that otherwiſe it is not to be obtained. The Mind deſpiſeth all violence, or coaction from the Will: Yea, it implys a *Contradiction* that a man ſhould cauſe himſelf to *aſſent* unto that unto which he doth not aſſent. Can then other men compell this aſſent? It is ſo far otherwiſe that God himſelf will not; yea, be it ſpoken with reverence of his Holineſs, cannot force ſuch an aſſent, ſeeing it implies a Contradiction; Namely, that a man ſhould *aſſent* and *not aſſent* to the ſame Propoſition at the ſame time: Neither can a man himſelf force himſelf, neither can all the men in the World force him, to underſtand more than he doth underſtand, or can do ſo. Men do not ſeem to have exerciſed many reflect Acts of Conſidertaion on themſelves, who ſuppoſe that any can command their Underſtandings to apprehend what they pleaſe, or to aſſent unto things at their will. Theſe things follow Conviction and Evidence; and ſo God himſelf procures the *Aſſent of Men* unto what he revealeth; and otherwiſe the Underſtanding is abſolutly free from all impoſition.

If a man then cannot underſtand theſe things to be approved of God, and accepted with him; ſuppoſe they are ſo, yet if a man cannot apprehend them ſo to be, what is the next work that *Conſcience* will apply it ſelf unto? Is it not to declare in the Soul, that if it practiſe theſe things, God will judge it the Laſt Day, and pronounce Sentence againſt him? For Conſcience, as was ſaid, is a Mans Judgement of Himſelf and his Moral Actions, with reſpect unto the future Judgement of God. And I am perſwaded that this is the condition of Thouſands, in reference to the preſent Impoſitions. Their Apprehenſions and Judgements of themſelves in this Matter, are to them unavoidable and inſuperable. It is not in their power to think otherwiſe than they do, nor to judge otherwiſe of themſelves in reference unto the the practiſe of the things impoſed on them, than they do. Neither can all the men in the World force them to think, or judge otherwiſe.

otherwise. If ever Light, and Evidence unto their Conviction of the Contrary, is imparted to them, or do befall them, they will think and judge according to it; in the mean time, they crave that they may not be forced to act against their Light and Consciences, and so unavoidably cast themselves into destruction. All then that some desire of others, is, That they would but give them leave to endeavour to please God; seeing they know it is a fearful thing to fall into his Hands as an Avenger of Sin. God deals not thus with Men; for although He requires them to believe whatever He reveals, and proposes as an object of Faith, and to obey whatever He commands, yet he gives them *sufficient evidence* for the one, and Warranty of his Authority in the other; and himself alone is JUDGE of what Evidence is so sufficient. But men can do neither of these: They can neither give Evidence to their Propositions, nor Warrant to their Authority in their Impositions in Spiritual things, and yet they exact more than doth God himself: But so it is, when once his Throne is invaded, his Holiness, Wisdom, and Clemency are not proposed to be imitated, but a fond abuse of Soveraignity alone, is aimed at.

To impose Penalties then inforcing men to a Compliance and Acting in the Worship of God, contrary unto what they are *Convinced in their Consciences* to be his Mind and Will, is to endeavour the inforcing of them to reject all respects unto the future Judgments of God; which as it is the highest wickedness in them to do, so hath not God *Authorized* any of the Sons of men, by any means to endeavour their Compulsion unto it. For the former of these, *that men may Act in the things of God, contrary unto what they are perswaded he requires of them*; I suppose none will ever attempt to perswade themselves or others. Atheisme will be the end of such an Endeavour.

The *sole Question* is, Whether God hath Authorized, and doth warrant any man, of what sort soever, to compell others to Worship and serve him, contrary to the way and manner that they are in their Consciences perswaded that he doth accept and approve. God indeed where men are in *Errours* and *Mistakes* about his Will and Worship would have them taught, and Instructed, and sendeth out his own Light and Truth to guide them, as seemeth good unto him.

But

But to affirm that he hath Authorized men to proceed in the way before mentioned, is to say, that he hath set up an Authority *against himself*, and that which may give controule to His.

These things being so, seeing Men are bound Indispensably not to Worship God so as they are convinced and perswaded, that he will not be Worshiped; and to Worship him as he hath Appointed and Commanded, upon the Penalty of Answering their Neglect and Contempt hereof with their everlasting Condition at the last day; And seeing God hath not Warranted or Authorized any man to *inforce* them to *Act contrary to their Light*, and that perswasion of his Mind and Will which he hath given them in their own Consciences; nor to *punish* them for yeilding Obedience in *Spiritual things* unto the Command of God as his mind is by them apprehended, if the things themselves, though mistaken, are such as no way interfere with the common Light of Nature or Reason of Man-kind, the Fundamental Articles of Christian Religion, Moral Honesty, Civil Society, and Publike Tranquility: especially if in the things wherein men acting, as is supposed, according to their own Light and Conscience in difference from others, are of small Importance, and such as they probably plead are unduly and ungroundedly imposed on their Practice, or Prohibited unto them, it remains to be considered whether the grounds and ends proposed in Exercise of the Severity pleaded for, be agreeable to common Rules of Prudence, or the state and condition of things in this Nation.

The ground which men proceed upon in their resolutions for Severity, seemes to be, That the *Church* and **Common-Wealth** may stand upon the same **Bottome** and **Foundation**; that their Interest may be every way the same, of the same *breadth* and *length*, and to be mutually *narrowed* or *widened* by each other.

The *Interest of the Kingdome* they would have to stand upon the *Bottome of Uniformity*: So that the Government of it should, as to the beneficial ends of Government, comprehend them only, whom the Church compriseth in its *Uniformity*; and so the Kingdoms Peace, should be extended only unto them, unto whom the Churches Peace is extended. Thus they say, that the

Kingdom and the Church, or its present Order and Establishment, are to be like *Hypocrates* Twins, not only to be Born together, and to Die together, but to cry and laugh together, and to be equally affected with their mutual Concerns: But these things are evident mistakes in Policy, and such as Multiplied *Experience* have evidenced so to be. The Comparison of *Monarchie* or the Fundamental Constitution of the Policy and Government of this Nation, with the present Church-Order, and State, Established on a Right, *mutable* and changeable Laws; And which have received many alterations, and may at any time when it seems good to the King and Parliament, receive more; is expressive of a *Principle* of so evil an Aspect towards the *solid Foundation* of the Policy of this Nation, as undoubtedly those who are principally concerned in it, are obliged not to admit an avowance of. For whereas it is not the *Gospel* in general, nor Christian Religion, or Religion considered as it best corresponds with the Gospel, or the mind of Christ therein, but the present Church-Order, Rule and Policy, that is intended; all men know that it is Founded in, and stands solely amongst us, on such Laws, as is usual with Parliaments to Enact in one Session, and to repeale in another; or at least to Enact in one Age, and to repeale in another, according as Use and Experience manifests them to be conducing, or obstructing unto Publick Good. And whereas the constitution of the Civil Government of the Nation, is built upon no such Alterable or Changable Laws, but hath quite another Foundation, Obnoxious to Nothing, but to the All-over-Ruling Providence of the most High, it is a great shaking and weakning unto its *Fixation* and Interest in the minds of Men, to have it compared with things every day alterable at pleasure. And the attempt to Plant the Kingdomes Peace, on the Foundation of the Churches Uniformity, which may on a thousand occasions wherein the Peace of the Kingdom of it self is not in the least concerned, be narrowed unto a Scantling wholy unproportionate unto such a Superstruction, is without doubt as great a mistake in Government as any persons can fall into. All the World knows, how full at this day it is of various Opinions and Practises in things concerning Religion; and how unsuccessful the Attempts of all sorts have been for their Extinguishment.

It

It is no leſs known, as hath in part already been diſcourſed, how unavoidable unto Men, conſidering the various *Allotments* of their Condition in Divine Providence, their different Apprehenſions and Perſwaſions about theſe things are. He therefore that will build the Intereſt of a Nation, on an Uniformity of *Sentiment* and Practices in theſe things, had need well fix this *floating Delos*, if he intend not to have his Government continually toſſed up and down.

The true Civil Intereſt of this Nation, in the *Policy*, *Government*, and *Laws* thereof, with the *Benefits* and *Advantages* of them, and the *Obedience* that is due unto them, **Every** **Engliſh-Man is born unto**; he falls into it from the Womb; it grows up with him; he is *indiſpenſably* engaged into it, and holds all his temporal Concernments by it: He is able alſo by *Natural Reaſon* to underſtand it, ſo far as in point of Duty he is concerned, and is not at liberty to diſſent from the Community. But as for Religion, it is the Choice of Men; and he that chuſeth not his Religion, hath none: For although it is not of neceſſity, that a Man *formally* chooſes a Religion, or *one way in Religion* in an oppoſition unto, and with the *rejection of another*; yet it is ſo that he ſo chooſes in oppoſition to no *Religion*, and with Judgement about it, and approbation of that which he doth embrace, which hath the nature of a voluntary choice.

This being the Liberty, this the Duty of every Man, which is, always hath been, and probably always will be iſſued in great variety of Perſwaſions, and different Apprehenſions, to confine the Peace and Intereſt of Civil Societies unto any one of them, ſeems ſcarce ſuitable unto that Prudence which is requiſite for the ſteerage of the preſent ſtate of things in the World. For my part, I can ſee no reaſon the **Civil State** hath to expoſe its Peace unto all thoſe Uncertain Events which this Principle will lead unto. And it ſeems very ſtrange, and I am perſwaded that on due Conſideration it will ſeem ſtrange that any ſhould continue in deſire of confining the bottom of the Nations Intereſt in its Rule and Peace, unto that **Uniformity in Religion**, which as to a firm Foundation in the *Minds* and *Conſciences* of *Men*, hath diſcovered it ſelf to be no more diffuſed amongſt the Body of the People, than at preſent it is, and from which ſuch Multitudes do,

upon grounds to themſelves unconquerable, diſſent; reſolving to continue ſo doing, whatever they ſuffer for it; who yet otherwiſe unanimouſly acquieſce in the **Civil Government**, and are willing to contribute to the utmoſt of their Endeavours, in their ſeveral places, unto its Peace and Proſperity.

Whatever therefore be the Reſolution as to a preſent *procedure*, I heartily wiſh that the *Principle* it ſelf might for the future be caſt out of the Minds of Men; that the State and Rule of the Nation, might not by plauſible and ſpecious pretences, ſuited to the intereſt of ſome few Men, be rendred obnoxious unto impreſſion from the variety of Opinions about things Religious, which as far as I ſee, is like to be continued in the World.

Eſpecially ought this conſideration, if I miſtake not, be applied unto thoſe Differences about which alone this Diſcourſe is intended; namely, thoſe which are amongſt men of the ſame Religion in all the *Subſtantials* of it, and which having been of long continuance deduced from one Age to another, are greatly diffuſed, and deeply rooted in the Minds of Men; being ſuch alſo, as no countenance can be given to act ſeverely towards them, from any thing in the Scriptures, or practiſe of the firſt Churches in the World.

And I hope it will never more amongſt ſober and diſ-engaged perſons be ſaid or thought, that the Intereſt of *England*, or of its Rule and Government, is in any thing confined unto a preciſe determination of the Differences in the Minds and Conſciences of Men, ſo that thoſe who are of one Mind in them, and would impoſe the Apprehenſion and Practiſe of their Perſwaſion upon others, ſhould be alone comprehended therein.

But let the *Ground* of this Severity in proceeding againſt Diſſenters be never ſo weak or infirm, yet if the *End* propoſed in it be accompliſhed, the Counſel will appear at laſt to have been *adviſeable*. What then is the end of theſe things, of this *Severity* ſo earneſtly preſſed after, to be engaged into? Suppoſe the beſt *appearing Succeſs* that in this caſe can be ſuppoſed, and all that ſeems to be deſired; namely that by *External Force* and Compulſion, Men be brought unto an *Outward Conformity* in, and unto the things that are impoſed on them. This is the utmoſt of what ſeems to be deſired or aimed at. For no man ſurely is ſo vain

vain as to imagine that *Compulsion* and *Penalties* are a means suited to perswade or convince the Minds of Men. Nay, Commonly it is known, that they have a contrary effect, and do exceedingly confirm men in their own perswasions, and into an alienation from the things they are compelled unto.

Suppose then this *End* to be obtained: Is there better Peace or Establishment assured to the present Church-Order thereby, than what it may enjoy whilst Men have their *Liberty* to profess their dissent? Both Reason and Experience do testifie the contrary.

Nor will the Church find any more *dangerous Opponents*, upon any emergent occasion, than those who have been *compelled* to *Uniformity* against their Conviction. For bearing their *Condition* always as their *Burthen*, they will not be wanting unto an opportunity to ease themselves of it.

And it may be sundry Persons now vested with *Ecclesiastical Power*, if they would recollect their former Thoughts and *Expressions*, might remember that they both conceived and declared their mind to this purpose; that *former Severities* in the like kind, were unduly and *disadvantagiously* pursued against that strong inclination in so many unto an Indulgence, and Freedom from their Impositions, which surely they cannot think to be now *lessened* or weakned.

But present Power is apt to change the minds of Men, and make them neither remember what were their former apprehensions, nor foresee what *would* be their thoughts upon a disappointment in their present Undertakings.

But neither yet can this rationally be supposed; nor is it probable in the least, that the outward Conformity intended, will ever be obtained by Rigor; especially where the reasons of it are so remote from influencing the Consciences of Men. For whatever Arguments may be used for a Restraint to be put upon *Conscience*, in things concerning *Faith* and the Worship of God, which must be taken from the nature of the things themselves, are utterly superseded and made useless, by the nature of the Differences that are in contest between the Imposers, and those that deprecate their Impositions. For as very little hath been done, especially of late, to prove the *Lawfulness* of the things imposed, nothing at all to assert their *Necessity*; so the nature of the things them-

themſelves, about which the difference is, quite caſts them out of the compaſs and reach of thoſe Arguments which are pleaded in the caſe of Coercion and Penalties in the things of Religion or the Worſhip of God. For if men ſhould be able to prove that *Hereſies* and *Idolatries* are to be *puniſhed* in the Perſons of them that do aſſert them: no Concluſion will or can be thence made, as I ſuppoſe, for their Puniſhment and Ruine, who by the Confeſſion of them that would puniſh them, are neither *Heretick*s nor *Idolaters*.

Force muſt ſtand alone in this caſe; and what ſmall Influence it is like to have on the practices of Men, when it hath no pretence of Reaſon nor Judgment, wherein *Conſcience* is concerned to give its countenance, is not uneaſie to determine. Nay *Experience* hath ſufficiently in moſt places baffled this Attempt: Violence hath been uſed in matters of Religion to the ſhame and ſtain of Chriſtianity; and yet never ſucceeded any where, to Extinguiſh that Perſwaſion and Opinion which it was deſigned to extirpate.

It may be; for a while indeed, and ſometimes it may obtain ſuch *ſucceſs*, as to ſeem to have effected the end aimed at. But ſtill within a ſhort ſpace, moſtly in the compaſs of the ſame Age, it hath been manifeſt, that it hath but laid in Proviſion for future Troubles, Oppoſitions, and Animoſities.

Let the Prelates, or Rulers therefore of the Church adviſe, preſs unto, and exerciſe this Severity whilſt they pleaſe; They may as evidently ſee the Iſſue of it, as if it were already accompliſhed. Some may be ruined, Multitudes provoked, the Trade of the Nation obſtructed, ſome few be inforced unto an *Hypocritical* compliance with what is againſt the Light of their Conſciences, compaſſion be ſtirred up in the reſidue of the People for innocent Sufferers, and by all Indignation againſt themſelves and their ways encreaſed; conſidering *what are* the things about which theſe differences are, How *deeply* rooted a diſſent from the preſent Eſtabliſhment is in the minds of Multitudes: For *how long* a ſeaſon that Perſwaſion hath been delivered down unto them, evenever ſince the firſt Reformation, gradualy encreaſing in its Suffrage to this day; the Advantages that it hath had for its Growth and Improvement,

provement, with *successes* evidently suitable unto them; and resolution that mens Spirits are raised unto, to suffer and forgo the utmost of their Earthly Concernments, rather than to live and die in an open Rebellion to the commanding Light of God in their Consciences: It is the utmost vanity to have other Expectations of the *end* of such a course of Rigor and Prosecution.

In the mean time, I am sure whoever gets by Persecution, the *King* looseth by it.

For what if some Officers of **Ecclesiastical Courts** have been inriched by the *booty* they have got from Dissenters? What advantage is it all this while to the *Kingdom*? when so many Families are Impoverished, so many ruined, as are by **Excommunications** and Imprisonments ensuing thereon, so many more discouraged from the exercise of their Faculties, or improvment of their Stocks, so many driven beyond the Seas; and yet all this nothing, unto what in the same kind, must and will ensue, if the course sometimes begun should be pursued. To me it seems that an *attempt* for the pretended Conformity, (for attained it will never be) is scarce a due Compensation for his *Majesties* loss in the diminishing of his **Subjects** and their Wealth, wherewith it is and will be certainly attended. Besides, to ruine men in all their *Substantials* of Body and Life, for **Ceremonies**, and those our own Country-men and Neighbours, seems to carry with it somewhat of that *severity* which **Englishmen** after the subsiding of the impetuous Impressions of Provocations, do naturally abhor, and will not long by any means give Countenance unto.

On the Consideration of these things, and other doubtless of more deep Investigation, his Majesty hath often declared, not only his *Resolution* to grant the *Indulgence* intimated in his Gracious Declaration to that purpose, but also the exceeding Suitableness of those Intentions unto his own Inclination and Clemency. The Advantages which have already ensued unto the Nation, in the Expectation of **Indulgence**, have been also remembred, and repeated by him with an uncontrouleable manifestation of its conduciblenes for the future, unto the Peace and Prosperity of the King-

Kingdom. And it seems very strange, that so Noble and Royal Dispositions, such Thoughts and Counsels of Wisdom and Authority, such Projections of Care and Solicitude for the Kingdoms Good, should be all Sacrificed to the Interest of any one Party of Men whatsoever.

I cannot but hope, that *His Majesty* will re-assume those blessed *Counsels of Peace:* Especially considering that the Spirits of Men are singularly disposed to receive and put a due Valuation upon the Execution of them. For all those who desiring *an Indulgence*, though differing amongst themselves in some things, do joyntly cast their Expectations and Desires into a dependance on His *MAJESTY*, with Advice of His *PARLIAMENT*.

And as notwithstanding their *Mutual Differences*, they are united in this Expectation, so may they be made Partakers of it: Although in other things their Differences continue, they cannot but agree in Loyalty and *Gratitude*: When *the Denyal of it unto them*, although they still differ *in other things*, will reconcile their Mindes in regreet against the *Impositions they joyntly undergo*.

And, whereas men have by the Fears, Dangers, and Sufferings which they have passed through, evidenced to all the World, that the **Liberty** and **Freedome** of their Consciences is of more consideration with them, than all other things whatever; and have learned themselves also how to esteem and value that **Liberty**, without which they are sensible how miserable their Condition is, and is like to be, it is impossible that any stronger Obligation unto Peaceableness Loyalty, and Thankfulness, can be put upon the **Subjects** of any Nation, then a Grant of the Indulgence desired would put upon Multitudes in this. This would set their minds at Liberty from Fears and Contrivances for the Avoidance of Impendent Dangers; incourage them to engage the utmost of their Endeavours and Abilities in the businesses of Peace and Security, leaving them no Fears, but only of any Disturbance of the state of things, which hath secured unto them all their principal Interests in the World.

And

And how fooliſh, ſenceleſs, and *unbecoming of Men*, would any other Thoughts be? To think, *That Men who have given this Evidence at leaſt, That they are ſuch as exerciſe* A Good Conſcience *towards God and Others, in that they have ſuffered for it, and are ready yet farther ſo to do, ſhould not deſpiſe and contemn all ſuggeſtions of unpeaceable Diſpoſitions, or ſhould ſuppoſe that they have any Community of Intereſt with ſuch as being not concerned in Conſcience with them; at leaſt not ſo far as to evidence it to be their Chief and Principal Intereſt, as theirs it is; or to have any Inclination to the Diſturbance of the Publique Tranquility, wherein all their Deſires and Aims are ſecured*; Is to judge by ſuch Imaginations of Folly, Madneſs and Wickedneſs, as Thoſe who uſe theſe Pretences, would be loth to be judged by; although They have not given that Teſtimony of Their Reſpects unto *Conſcience*, which the *Others* have done.

And hereby, whereas the Parliament have been neceſſitated through the Exigence of the publique Affairs, to engage the Nation in payments not paſſed through without difficulty, they will, as was ſaid, put a real and effectual Obligation upon great multitudes of Men, without the leaſt ſemblance of Diſadvantage unto any others.

Neither is this a matter of any *Expence*, but only of Generous Clemency in themſelves, and the depoſition of Wrath, Envy, and Revenge in ſome few others; things that may be parted withal, without the leaſt detriment unto humane Society. And, as it is in the Matter alone of Indulgence, and Conſcience, wherein the People are capable of a ſenſible Obligation, others not concerned therein, being apt to think that all which is done for them, is but their due, and leſs ſometimes then is ſo; thoſe Partakers of it, by an avowment of the favour received, will be in their own minds indiſpenſably bound to promote the common Intereſt of Publique Good.

It is true indeed, that the Parliament have thought meet ſome years paſt, to direct unto another courſe of Proceedure? But *Dies Diem Docet*.

And wise men are never wont pertinaciously to adheer unto the pursuite of *Conjectures* and *Projections* about *future Events*; Such as former Laws were Suited unto, against Experience, and those *second Thoughts* which a new consideration of things may suggest unto them: Besides the alterations of Affairs in many concernments, may fully justifie the alteration in Resolutions pleaded for; which is not such neither, as to be *contradictory* unto any thing already Established, but what may be brought into Compliance with it, and Subordination to it: They may say of what is past, as was by one said of old:

Res dura & regni Novitas me talia cogunt.

The present Assurance of publique Peace and Tranquility, admitts of Counsels impartially tending to the Good of all, uninfluenced by a mixture of Fears and Jealousies.

But suppose the Peace and Prosperity of the Nation to be much Secured and Advantaged by an Indulgence, as undoubtedly under the Protection and Blessing of God, it will be; yet I have heard some say, and it is commonly pleaded, That the *Church will not be able to keep its Station*, or to retain it Members in compliance; but they will many, if not most of them, make use of the Liberty desired; especially if it be for and unto *Protestants*, which must be prevented. Now this I confess seems strange to me, that any such *events* should be feared or expected.

Those who make this Objection, Suppose the *Church* to be really possessed of *Truth and Order* in the matters that are in difference; They express every day not only the great Sence they have of the *Learning*, Ability and Piety of the Clergy, but are ready also on all occasions, to contemn their Adversaries, as men Unlearned, Weak, and Inconsiderate. It is also granted that all outward Priviledges, Incouragements, Advantages, Promotions, Preferments, Dignities, Publick Conveniencies, Legal Maintainance, are still to be confined unto the Church, and its *Conformists*; as also that those who desire the benefit of Indulgence, must together with an Exemption from all these, pay all Dues

Dues required by the Law to them; and if they will joyn themselves unto others, besides a Deprivation of the great conveniencies of their usual places of Assemblies, and their Legal Interest in them, and the Inconveniencies of reparing unto other Assemblies, it may be far remote from their Habitations, contribute also to the Maintainance of their Teachers where it is indispensably needed.

If I say, all these and the like Considerations, with a Reputation of publick Favour, and regard with Authority, be not sufficient to preserve and secure the Church in its Station, and its Members in the Communion of it, **It is evident that they are things which have no Foundation in the Consciencies or Minds of Men, but stand meerly on the props of Law and Power.** Which if true, is yet a Secret which ought not to be divulged.

I confess Chief Justice *Hubbart*, in his Reports, in the Case of *Colt*, and the Bishop of *Coventry* and *Litchfield*, says, **That though it be de Jure Divino, that Christian People be provided of Christian Officers and Duties, as of Teaching, Administration of the Sacraments, and the like; and of Pastors for that purpose; and therefore to debar them wholly of it, were expresly against the Law of God; yet all other things, as he there shews, are not so: For (saith he) We know well that the primitive Church in her greatest purity, were but Voluntary Congregations of Believers, submitting themselves to the Apostles, and after to other Pastors, to whom they did minister of their Temporals, as God did move them.** A liberty for which state is pleaded for, the thing it self being owned to be according to the Pattern of the Primitive Church in her greatest Purity.

And if it be so as he speaks, all other Orders and Observances in the Church, must be built onely on *Law* and *Custom*. But yet such is their Force also on the minds of Men, that as attended with the advantages and conveniences before mentioned, and fenced by the inconveniences and disadvantages which attend Dissenters; the Differences also contended about, being of no more weight than they are; there is no doubt but the most of men, at least to the full as many as without force to Conscience, will do so under the severest Penalties to the contrary, will

continue their adherence to the present Church-state, although the Liberty of the dissent desired, should be indulged.

It may be this suggestion of Peace and Moderation, may not have an equal rellish unto all Pallats, nor find a like reception in the minds of all. The *Interest* of some, and the *Prejudices* of others, are so important with them, as that they cannot attend unto impartial Reason in this matter. I am perswaded that *some* have scarce any better or more forcible Argument, to satisfie their own Minds that they are in the right in Religion, than the inclination they find in themselves to hate and persecute them whom they suppose to be in the wrong; or at least that they can no longer believe that to be Truth which they profess, than whilst they are willing and ready to destroy with violence that which is contrary unto it. For what is *forborn*, they suppose must needs be approved; all which are so palpable misapprehensions, as there needs no Endeavour to lay them open.

It is far enough from being an evidence of Truth in any, that they are ready to destroy them that are otherwise minded. It is Errour and Superstition, which being conscious of their own *weakness*, are impatient until their Contraries are ruined. And never are there such Mutual Violences in Matters of Religion, as where the several opposite Parties are all of them most grosly erroneous and superstitious.

The *Egyptians* were of old the scorn and sport of the World for their *Devotions* in general: *Oxen*, *Apes*, *Crocodiles*, *Garlick*, and *Onions*, being some of the best of their Deities: And yet about these they had amongst themselves such endless Animosities, and mutual Persecutions of one another, as can scarce be paralleli'd. So he tells us:

Immortale odium & nunquam sanabile bellum,
Ardet adhuc ombos & Tentyra; summus utrinq;
Inde furor vulgo, quod numina vicinorum
Odit uterq; locus.

And what was the ground and occasion of the Quarrel?

——*Cro-*

——*Crocodilum adorat*
Pars hæc, illa pavet ſaturam Serpentibus Ibin.

Their Controverſie was about the Worſhip of a *Crocodile* on the one hand, and of a *Fowl* that *devoured Serpents*, on the other.

Neither is the Difference of much more importance, or managed with much more moderation, which is at this Day between the *Turks* and *Perſians*, about the true Succeſſors of *Mahomet*.

So little Reaſon have Men to pleaſe themſelves with a ſurmize of being *poſſeſſed of the Truth*, by the inclination that they find in themſelves to perſecute the contrary: Seeing ſuch an inclination is an inſeparable Companion of Error and Superſtition, and is generally heightened to Cruelty and Revenge, according as Men by them are drenched in Folly and Blindneſs.

It is yet pretended by ſome, *That ſuch a Toleration as will ſatisfie them that deſire it, and ſecure the Publique Tranquility, however it may pleaſe in the* **notion** *of it, will yet be found* **unpracticable** *when it comes to be examined and inſtanced.*

But it is evident that theſe pretences muſt be countenanced by ſome peculiar Conſideration of this Nation, and Government thereof; ſeeing the utmoſt of what is here deſired, is both eſtabliſhed and practiſed in other Nations. The whole of it is plainly exerciſed in the *Kingdom of France*, where the *Proteſtants* paying all Duties to the Church, ſuſtaining all Burthens and Offices in the Commonwealth, equal with others, are freed from *Eccleſiaſtical Courts*, *Cenſures*, and *Offices*, and all Penalties for their Diſſent, with an *allowance* for the Worſhip of God in their own Aſſemblies, provided by themſelves, and known to the Magiſtrates under whoſe Juriſdiction they are; which is the ſum of all that is here deſired. The like Liberty, if I miſtake not, is granted to the *French* and *Dutch* Churches here in *England*. The *United Provinces of the Netherlands* have continued in the ſame practiſe ever ſince the Reformation. So alſo hath the Kingdom of *Poland*, where the Diſſenters are both numerous,

and

and divided among themſelves. *Lutherans* are tolerated in the Dominions of the *Pauls-grave*, Elector of *Brandenburg*, and Landtgrave of *Haſſia*: So are *Calviniſts* in many free Cities of the Empire; in ſome places of the Kingdom of *Denmark*: And both *Lutherans* and *Calviniſts* in ſundry Principalities in *Germany*, whoſe Magiſtrates are of the Roman Religion. In the *Hereditary Dominions* of the Emperour, where-ever Difference in Religion once made an entrance, either a Forbearance and Toleration is granted and continued, as in *Hungary*; or the Countries themſelves have been made utterly waſte and deſolate, as *Bohemia* and *Moravia*, and yet in a great meaſure continue ſo to be. The Attempts of the Duke of *Savoy* againſt it, have been condemned, deteſted and abhorred, by all Princes of the ſame Religion with himſelf, and yet have ended in ſome tollerable forbearance. It is alſo known, that the **Kings of England** have by vertue of their Power in things **Eccleſiaſtical**, in all Ages as occaſion required, and as they ſaw meet, exempted Perſons and Societies from the common and ordinary courſe and way of Church-Diſcipline and Inſpection.

Certainly therefore the *unpracticableneſs* of ſuch an **Indulgence** lies in the deſires of them, whoſe Intereſt, as they apprehend, is oppoſite unto it; although it is more probable, that their Moderation known and declared in this matter, would give them a greater Intereſt in publique Eſteem and Veneration, then by any other ways they are like to obtain. Neither is this at all by wiſe men to be deſpiſed, who are able to foreſee the probable events of continued Exaſperation. Why then ſhould men pretend, that that cannot be done, which hath been done, and is done at this day in ſo many Kingdoms and Nations, with the wiſhed-for ſucceſs by Peace and Happineſs?

And as it may be very *few Inſtances* can be given of ſuch Severity againſt Diſſenters, who come up to ſo full an Agreemment in all material things with them from whom they diſſent, as that of late practiſed, and ſtill preſſed for in *England*; ſo it will be found, that whether we reſpect the Nature and Temper of the People of this Land, or the admiſſion of the Principles of Diſſent, with the grounds of them, in Multitudes; or the Reſolu-

tion

tion to undergo all Difficulties and Sufferings, rather than to transgress against the Light of their Consciences; or their Valuation of Forbearance above all Secular Things whatever: There is no Nation under Heaven, wherein such an INDULGENCE or TOLERATION as is desired, would be more Welcome, Useful, Acceptable, or more subservient to Tranquility, Trade, Wealth and Peace.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 3. line 22. for *Omni* read *Omnis*.